

Those opposed to racial preferences claim that it is the way affirmative action actually equalizes the playing field that is unfair. But this argument only works if an alternative solution is proposed and enforced.

This has not happened. So in the absence of affirmative action, the best solution to leveling the playing field in educational opportunity is to equally fund all public schools.

All Americans should want to eliminate any barriers that underprivileged people now face in attempting to educate themselves and make a decent living.

In the meantime, there is still something to be said for hard work. But at the same time, when hard work cannot save a large portion of society from living a lower-class lifestyle, our system of capitalism is failing.

That is why it is imperative that public schools be funded equally and that people who can't afford college tuition can still go to college if they so choose.

Capitalism relies on the theory of competition, and the hardest work and greatest talent paying off the most. Right now, the hardest work and greatest talent can get you nowhere or anywhere depending on where you start from.

For a capitalist system to hold true to its ideals—and to even be efficient—it must allow people from all types of backgrounds to have the same opportunities; or else the best will not always reach the places where they can be most productive.

This will never occur until we have equal funding and equal opportunity at all levels of our educational system.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FLAKE). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mr. OWENS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. OWENS. Mr. Speaker, in harmony with the theme that the 1-hour presentation on Black History Month has set forth, is there a color line, is there racism, emphatically, yes, there is. This does not prevent us from noting the positive achievements that have taken place and the progress that has been made. We are quite pleased that there are now 39 Members of the House of Representatives who are African Americans. We have gotten back what we lost certainly after the Civil War. There were some 30 representatives elected, some in the Senate as well as the House.

All that was lost. Step by step we have seen gains wiped out over the years during reconstruction, and for about a hundred years before the civil rights movement under Martin Luther King we were steadily going backwards and every achievement that was accomplished was accomplished without the help of the mainstream population, just about every achievement. Many of the achievements were accomplished despite a great deal of hostility and animosity from the mainstream population.

I sit on the Committee on Education and the Workforce and, of course, am very interested in all aspects of edu-

cation. The historically black colleges and universities, fortunately, are in the spotlight and have been the recipients of quite a bit of Federal attention from both parties in the last year or so; and in the last 10 years the Federal Government has stepped up to the plate and provided special assistance to the 113 historically black colleges and universities. They were established and they achieved a very important role, have come to a very important role, achieved a very important place in African American society by educating those who could not get an education anywhere else. Many of our leaders of today still are graduates of historically black colleges and universities.

But the history of those institutions is a history where they got very little help from the mainstream society, and they received a lot of hostility and animosity from the local communities. The southern communities were often very hostile toward the so-called intellectuals who were in the black colleges and universities.

Even after the Morrill Act, the Federal act which established land grant colleges in every State, even after that Act was amended to establish a parallel land grant college in the segregated States where blacks were not allowed to attend the land grant colleges, even after that happened, there was tremendous discrimination. The amount of money received by the land grant colleges which blacks attended, were allowed to attend, were allowed to set up and provide a faculty for, et cetera, was much smaller. The amount of money was much smaller. That historically was the case, and even today those same land grant colleges established by the Federal Government are receiving less funding from the States than the land grant colleges that serve primarily the mainstream population, traditionally white land grant colleges.

So every step of the way there have been impediments. Is race a factor? Yes, unfortunately, it is. All over the world you have racism, and certainly you have racism in the United States. But the important thing is to note that we must operate and act and work constantly to make certain that the negative impact of racism is not used to make other people suffer. We must alleviate as much racism as possible, counteract as much racism as possible, pass laws which keep racism in check. That is the best we can do.

History has shown us that the only way we can guarantee that you will be able to make the progress that these institutions have made and be able to cite the positive accomplishments is that some group has to work against the prevailing, ongoing racism. We have had in America a golden opportunity to do that.

□ 1845

What makes America great is that it provides the room, it provides the leeway, to fight; and we have fought and accomplished a great deal, despite the racism.

I would like to look forward to the day when an American President could say that he wants to apologize for slavery and receive the overwhelming support of the American people. Unfortunately, when President Clinton implied that he might want to do that in the last year of his term, he was criticized; and there was a poll taken and the majority of white Americans, 70 percent, said no, there should be no apology for slavery.

We can apologize for the Holocaust. The Germans can apologize for the Holocaust, and the Japanese asked to apologize to the Chinese and Koreans; but there should be no apology for slavery, the majority of American people said.

That is unfortunate, because the opposite of not apologizing is covering up. It does not mean I refuse to apologize; but it means I will cover up, and we will continue to cover it up.

The only way we can break the back of racism and guarantee that racism will not be harmful is to recognize it and jointly, black-white, all minorities, work together to try to alleviate the harsh impact and effect of racism, so everybody in America has an equal opportunity to go forward.

Black History Month is a time to celebrate those positive achievements; it is also a time to remind everybody that we cannot achieve unless we recognize the truth of racism and attempt to combat it.

REQUEST FOR OUT OF ORDER SPECIAL ORDER

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous request to address the House for 5 minutes.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FLAKE). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New Jersey?

Mr. MCINNIS. Mr. Speaker, reserving the right to object, my understanding from the gentleman's side was that they were, first of all, going to run about a half an hour, but they certainly are entitled to an hour, so I have no objection to that.

But now this is the second 5 minutes, and I would like to know when the speakers are going to end. We have another speaker behind myself, and we would like to stay on schedule. I was assured by the gentleman's side a few moments ago they had one 5-minute request, and now we are into two 5-minute additional requests. They have had an hour.

I guess I would just like to know from the gentleman's side, how much longer it is going to continue.

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. MCINNIS. I yield to the gentleman from New Jersey.

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, I am sorry if there was a misunderstanding. We thought the gentleman was advised there would be two speakers. However, the gentleman certainly has the right to object.